

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY JIDDA

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AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 10640

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR,UR,US,UK,IS

SUBJECT: SOVIETS DISCUSS ME POLICY WITH BRITISH

BEIRUT PASS BAGHDAD

HELSINKI FOR SECRETARY'S PARTY AND AMBASSADOR STOESSEL

1. SUMMARY. IN DISCUSSIONS WITH MFA MIDDLE EAST OFFICIALS, BRITISH FOREIGN OFFICE ASSISTANT UNDER SECRETARY WEIR WAS TOLD BY SYTENKO THAT MOSCOW CONSIDERED THE STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH AS "LEADING TO A BLIND ALLEY", AND BELIEVED A RECONVENED GENEVA CONFERENCE WAS THE "ONLY VIABLE" FORUM FOR REACHING A ME SETTLEMENT. WHEN THE U.S. SPOKE ABOUT THE GENEVA CONFERENCE, SYTENKO CONTINUED, IT WAS ONLY
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REALLY REFERRING TO ENDORSEMENTS OF AGREEMENTS WHICH

HAD ALREADY BEEN REACHED. HE SAID THAT MEPC SHOULD BE RECONVENED "AS SOON AS POSSIBLE," BUT REFUSED TO BE PINNED DOWN AS TO SPECIFIC TIMING. LIKEWISE, ALTHOUGH INSISTING THAT THE PALESTINIANS BE REPRESENTED ON EQUAL BASIS WITH OTHER PARTIES, SYTENKO DID NOT STATE THAT THEY SHOULD NECESSARILY BE PRESENT AT THE START OF THE CONFERENCE. EN DSUMMARY.

2. OUR BRITISH COLLEAGUES HAVE REPORTED TO US THE RESULTS OF RECENT DISCUSSIONS WITH THE SOVIETS HELD BY A GROUP OF FOREIGN OFFICE ASSISTANT UNDER SECRETARIES IN MOSCOW JULY 24-25. ASSISTANT UNDER SECRETARY WEIR, RESPONSIBLE FOR THE MIDDLE EAST, MET WITH SYTENKO AND PYRULIN, DIRECTOR AND DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF THE NEAR EAST COUNTRIES DIVISION OF THE MFA, FOR A TOUR D'HORIZON OF THAT PART OF THE WORLD.

3. GENEVA CONFERENCE. THE SOVIETS DESCRIBED THE STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH AS "LEADING TO A BLIND ALLEY", AND SAID ISRAEL'S POLICY WAS SIMPLY AIMED AT PROLONGING "INDEFINITELY" ITS OCCUPATION OF ARAB LANDS. SYTENKO ASSERTED THE "ONLY VIABLE" VENUE FOR A GENUINE ME SETTLEMENT WAS A RECONVENED GENEVA CONFERENCE. WHEN QUERIED ABOUT WHAT THE SOVIETS MEAN BY THEIR REPEATED REFERENCE TO THE NECESSITY FOR "CAREFUL PREPARATIONS" OF THE MEPC, SYTENKO REPLIED THAT THIS REFERS LARGELY TO QUESTIONS SUCH AS SEATING ARRANGEMENTS AND COMPOSITION OF WORKING GROUPS. WEIR GENTLY REJOINED THAT QUESTIONS OF REPRESENTATION AND PARTICIPATION AT THE CONFERENCE WERE PERHAPS OF EQUAL IMPORTANCE AND SYTENKO SOMEWHAT GRUDGINGLY ALLOWED THAT THIS WAS TRUE AS WELL. ON THE LATTER SCORE, SYTENKO INSISTED THE PALESTINIANS SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN A NEW CONFERENCE ON AN EQUAL BASIS WITH THE OTHER PARTIES. HE SAID THAT "IN PRINCIPLE" THE PALESTINIANS SHOULD PARTICIPATE "FROM THE BEGINNING," BUT THAT THIS WAS A MATTER OF TACTICS.

4. SYTENKO TOLD THE BRITISH THAT THE CONFERENCE SHOULD BE RECONVENED "AS SOON AS POSSIBLE" AND STRESSED THAT "NOW IS THE TIME" TO RESOLVE THIS ISSUE. "THE ARABS CAN WORK ON RESOLUTIONS OTHER THAN 242," HE SAID, AND REFERRED

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IN THIS CONTEXT TO THE 1947 UN RESOLUTIONS ON PALESTINE.

5. PERSIAN GULF. WHEN ASKED ABOUT THE IMPROVEMENT IN IRAN-IRAQ RELATIONS, SYTENKO REPLIED THAT THE SOVIET UNION HAS ALWAYS ENCOURAGED PEACE IN THE AREA AND SO WAS QUITE PLEASED WITH THESE DEVELOPMENTS AND SUPPORTED BOTH PARTIES IN THEIR EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE BETTER RELATIONS. ON THE OTHER HAND, SYTENKO WAS NOT POSITIVE TOWARD THE

CONCEPT OF A PERSIAN GULF SECURITY SYSTEM WHICH HAS BEEN FLOATED RECENTLY. MOSCOW, HE SAID, IN THIS REGARD, HAS ALWAYS OPPOSED MILITARY BLOCS. FURTHERMORE, SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT WOULD BE COUNTER TO SOVIET POSITION ON LOS IN THAT IT MIGHT AFFECT RIGHTS OF OTHER STATES TO TRANSIT THE GULF.

6. LIBYA. WHEN ASKED ABOUT THE RECENT ARMS DEAL WITH LIBYA, SYTENKO COULD ONLY ANSWER THAT FRANCE IS SELLING MIRAGES TO QADHDHAFI AND BRITISH THEMSELVES WERE ARMS MERCHANTS TO THE MIDDLE EAST, "WHY SHOULDN'T THE SOVIET UNION ALSO SELL ARMS?", HE ASKED RHETORICALLY.

7. COMMENT: SYTENKO'S REMARKS ON STEP-BY-STEP NEGOTIATIONS CONTRAST SOMEWHAT WITH MOSCOW'S PUBLIC POSITION AND WITH THE MORE UNDERSTANDING LINE WE HAVE HEARD IN OUR OWN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE SOVIETS ON THE MIDDLE EAST. IT IS PERHAPS NOTEWORTHY IN THIS REGARD THAT SYTENKO WAS NOT ANNOUNCED TODAY AS ONE OF THE OFFICIALS ACCOMPANYING BREZHNEV AND GROMYKO TO HELSINKI. HE HAS BEEN ALONG ON PREVIOUS HIGH LEVEL TALKS AND HIS ABSENCE MAY WELL INDICATE THAT THE SOVIETS ARE PRESENTLY CONTENT TO BE COMPARATIVELY PASSIVE REGARDING THE MIDDLE EAST.
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